

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

DATE: **JULY 26, 2006**

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Sheehan
Barody
Kenny
Geraghty

Absent:

Supervisors Monroe
VanNess
Gabriels

Others Present:

Robert Metthe, Director of Information
Technology
William Thomas, Chairman
Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative
& Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk
Francis O'Keefe, County Treasurer
Paul Dusek, County Attorney
Supervisor F. Thomas
Carlene Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office
Specialist

Mr. Sheehan called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Kenny, and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Metthe, Director of Information Technology, who distributed an Agenda packet to the committee members (a copy of which is on file with the minutes).

Mr. Sheehan acknowledged the County Treasurer, Frank O'Keefe, was present and had requested an opportunity to address the Committee.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. O'Keefe, who said he wanted to update the Committee on the payroll conversion over to the New World software system. He reported the letter he sent to the president of New World had prompted very good results. He explained that almost all of the problem areas had been resolved, and the remaining few were nearly complete. He pointed out that Washington County had experienced a significant number of problems with their conversion to New World which he felt had helped pave the way for Warren County. Consequently, he estimated the system would be ready to "go live" by September.

Mrs. Sady entered the meeting at 10:17 a.m.

Responding to questions from Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Metthe clarified there were a couple of minor issues that were yet to be resolved. He also stated that Warren County had initially been scheduled as the first County in New York State to "go live" with New World's payroll system. However, he noted, the Treasurer's Office staff had thoroughly reviewed the software and found a number of issues which concerned them.

Therefore, he noted, Warren County slowed down the process and Washington County went forward. At this point, he commented that New World will resolve Washington County's issues first and may not be available for Warren County as early as September. He said he would work with New World to schedule the transition as soon as it was feasible.

Mrs. Parsons entered the meeting at 10:19 a.m.

Mr. O'Keefe verified that he would prefer to allow New World an adequate amount of time to resolve the problem areas before Warren County's 1,000+ employees were adversely affected. He observed that the New World representatives had been very helpful and cooperative. He concurred with Mr. Metthe that the live transition may be as soon as September or October.

Mr. Sheehan extended his appreciation to Mr. O'Keefe for his report.

Mr. O'Keefe left the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Mr. Metthe began his Agenda review with Item 1, Request for Out-of-State travel, as he explained the New World User's Conference was scheduled for September 17-19, 2006. He explained he would like the Business Analyst, Tammie DeLorenzo, to attend the conference, since he found last year's conference to be extremely valuable.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Barody and carried unanimously to approve the request for out-of-state travel on September 17-19, 2006 to allow Tammie DeLorenzo to attend the New World's 2006 Executive Customer Conference in Chicago, Illinois; and authorized a resolution be prepared for the August 18th Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Metthe continued the Agenda review at Item 2, Personnel Structure change, as he explained he saw the need for a new Junior Help Desk type of position. He explained his staff included a temporary employee who had first joined the Department through the Intern Program with ACC (Adirondack Community College). He stated the Intern had been retained on a temporary, hourly basis that had gradually increased to nearly full-time hours.

Mr. Metthe further explained his Department was actively working with the Department of Social Services (DSS) with regards to managing their computer systems. Consequently, he noted the Help Desk had the most pressing need for staffing. Currently, he said the Information Technology (IT) Budget listed a vacant Computer Programmer with a base salary of \$35,000. He suggested the position could be replaced with the Help Desk position, at a base salary of \$22-24,000. Since the position would generally serve the needs of the DSS, he said he understood the salary would be billed to DSS, and they would receive a 70% reimbursement from the State to cover the salary costs.

Motion was made by Mr. Barody and seconded by Mr. Kenny to authorize the request to abolish the Computer Programmer position and create a new Junior Help Desk Technician.

Responding to questions from various Supervisors, Mr. Metthe explained the proposed salary of \$22-\$24,000 had been based on the previous entry level salary for the Help Desk Technician. He acknowledged the County's relationship with ACC had helped locate the really sharp, capable students for the Intern Program. He said he felt this could be a nice career path for the right individual.

Discussion ensued as the Supervisors expressed their concern that perhaps the entry-level salary was too low to expect the employee to stay with the County.

Mrs. Parsons suggested the position may be designated as a "trainee" position with the clear understanding the person would be transitioned into a more permanent position and salary down the road. She explained the Probation Department has had good success with such an approach to staffing.

Mr. Sheehan called the question and the motion was unanimously carried to approve the request to abolish the Computer Programmer position and create a new Help Desk Technician Trainee, with the salary to be determined in conjunction with the Personnel Director; and authorized the request be forwarded to the Personnel Committee. A copy of the request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Dusek entered the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Paul Dusek, County Attorney, who explained his office had received a memo from the Clerk of the Board. He said the memo contained a list of pending items for various Committees. As for the IT Committee, he noted one of the items related to the Town of Chester's need for some IT services in the fall of 2005. At that time, he said, there were some discussions regarding an Inter-municipal Agreement which evolved into a program with all of the towns, yet no final decision was ever made. He noted the Clerk of the Board had been carrying the item forward since that time and he queried what direction the Committee would like to take.

Mr. Metthe said he was aware there were certain municipalities that may be interested in using the IT Department's services, such as the Employment and Training Office and the NYS Department of Labor. He explained his Department currently assisted Offices that were not truly County Departments, such as the Office for the Aging (OFA) and Mental Health Services.

Mr. Dusek explained the OFA and Mental Health were staffed with County employees, although they were Federally funded programs. He encouraged Mr. Metthe to explore whether or not there were Federal funds that could flow through to the IT Department. The issue he was concerned with was whether or not the Committee wanted to provide

services to municipalities, which were totally separate from the County. If the Town of Chester was an isolated incident, then he said he was not concerned. Otherwise, if the other Towns were also in need of assistance, he said he would need to know how to proceed.

In response, Mr. Metthe commented that if the various Departments had Federal dollars to flow through to IT, some sort of billing structure would need to be in place. He clarified that he was not actively recruiting additional projects for his staff to work on, yet he would like some direction regarding the calls received thus far.

Mr. Wm. Thomas entered the meeting at 10:35 a.m.

Mr. Barody apprized the Committee that he and Mr. Metthe had recently discussed a potential project for the City of Glens Falls. He explained the project would blend some city and county services together for better purchasing power. In addition, he said he had suggested the Committee Chairman, Supervisor Sheehan, may want to meet with the City of Glens Falls Common Council Members to investigate the possible sharing of infrastructure, telecommunications, data transmission lines, etc. Eventually, he said the matter would come before the Municipal Shared Services Committee, as well.

Mr. Barody commented that in his opinion, the IT Department appeared to have enough County projects for the staff to work on. He said he did not feel the County would want to provide day-to-day services to other municipalities. Before that could happen, he said he felt the IT Department would need to be seriously reviewed, and clearly define how that would happen.

Mr. Dusek commended Mr. Metthe's staff on their management of the "full plate" of activities. He clarified his original remarks were simply intended to clear up the Town of Chester matter, that had been brought to his attention by Mrs. Sady, the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Barody stated the Committee members were all impressed with Joan Sady, the Clerk of the Board, and her efficient handling of the pending items.

Mr. Sheehan observed the consensus of the Committee appeared to be the IT Department would NOT provide in-depth technical support to the municipalities of Warren County, at this time.

Mr. Metthe explained that his Department had recently installed a new telecommunications system for the OFA, which now gives them access to the County Departments with the 3-digit phone extension. He said they use the County's equipment and are on the IT "backbone" which allows IT to service the phones via the phone lines. That way, he said his staff does not need to physically travel to the OFA offices. He said he felt such a structure was in the County's best interest to have all County offices set up that way.

Consequently, Mr. Metthe noted, the Employment and Training Offices (E&T) had requested the same type of telecommunications service for their office, since their existing phone systems were shot. However, he said the New York State Department of Labor (DOL) was semi-connected to the E&T offices and DOL would like to be included on the system, as well. In his opinion, he said, the E&T Office and DOL situation appeared to be very similar to a municipality.

Continuing, Mr. Metthe reminded the Committee the New York State Court System was on the County's telecommunications lines and was charged \$15 per phone per month. Such charges, he explained, helped to offset the costs to the IT Department for the superior tools and support provided.

Mr. Metthe suggested if the E&T/DOL system was handled in the same way the Court System was the County may be able to at least break even, if not come out a little bit ahead.

Mr. Barody said he felt Mr. Metthe's approach was right on target, and he mentioned the City of Glens Falls may be looking to do something similar. However, he acknowledged that Mr. Metthe had a limited amount of staff resources.

Mr. Sheehan said it appeared to him there was a fine line between protecting the IT staff from being spread too thin, while trying to provide support to related County Offices, or other municipalities.

General discussion ensued.

Responding to questions from various Supervisors, Mr. Metthe observed there were in-effect, two distinct sides to the IT Department: the Technical Help Desk, Telecommunications, Infrastructure vs. the Software, Systems and Business Analysis. Specifically, he mentioned IT supported over 500 users on the telephone system. Although the OFA installation was a big project, the support of the system is actually very minor, due to the quality systems in place.

Mr. Metthe expounded on the difference between the software systems support (New World, Payroll, Probation Management) and the telecommunications, infrastructure, help desk applications. He said Mr. Barody's comments regarding the possibilities with the City of Glens Falls were actually related to the infrastructure side of the Department.

Mr. Metthe queried the Committee as to how he should proceed with regards to the telecommunications request from E&T and DOL. He said that if the project could be scheduled along with the routine County work and the County came out on the positive side of the ledger, he would be in favor of working with the Offices.

Discussion ensued as to the various County Departments that had extensive projects

for the systems side of the Department.

Mr. Metthe pointed out the Department had suffered a serious loss when the Business Analysis resigned and finding the replacement had been very challenging. However, with the position now filled, he said he was optimistic the systems side of the Department would begin to make headway on their projects.

Mr. Metthe acknowledged the IT Budget did have funds available for contract work, if a definite need were to be identified. However, he said the right project for the right consultant had just not come along, thus far.

Returning to the E&T request, Mr. Metthe clarified that project would effect the technical support side of the Department. He said he would agree to take on the project, so long as the work was scheduled along with the other County Departments, and the Department was reimbursed with the Court Systems's fee structure.

Mr. Metthe pointed out that OFA, E&T and DOL would eventually be relocated at the new Health & Human Services Building. He said the telecommunications work would simply relocate with them, and would not be a waste of resources.

Mr. Barody observed the County was quickly approaching Budget time. He suggested Mr. Metthe could incorporate some of these projects into the Budget proposal, with some specific recommendations to address the projects waiting to be tackled.

Mrs. Parsons stated that she felt the employees could become more effective computer users, with a little bit more training. She said she was aware that Mr. Metthe had investigated training sessions with a company that would travel to the County Offices. Such sessions, she explained, could be conducted on campus, in Room 6-103, with half-day sessions and had been very successful in the past. Specifically, she said she felt there were a number of employees who could benefit from a class on Microsoft Outlook so the computers could be used more efficiently. She observed that some offices still hand wrote their envelopes which she felt was a loss in productivity.

Mr. Barody reiterated his concerns regarding the 2007 proposed IT Budget and he urged Mr. Metthe to develop a feasible proposal for consideration.

Mr. Metthe estimated that at least once a month, a brand new application seemed to surface, such as the new Tele-Health application in the Health Services Department. He commented that technology continues to develop and brings applications never conceived of just 2 years ago into reality. He pointed out the list of projects for the IT Department was basically a moving target. As an example, he said one study had recently claimed technology had changed more in the past 9 years than in the previous 90 years.

Mr. Metthe pointed out he had one consistent question that he applied to each and

every request, "Will it save the County either actual cash, or time, and make the County more efficient?" If the answer is yes, he said, the project hits high on his radar screen.

Mr. Barody urged the Committee to place strong communications with the user groups as a high priority. That way, he said he felt the County would continue to place its resources on the projects that provide the "most bang for the buck." He noted the user groups were continuously exposed to changes in their field, and what could or should be integrated into their department.

In addition, Mr. Metthe commended the Department Heads that were forward thinking and pushing for new applications and better efficiency. He acknowledged the County Attorney was one such Department Head, even though IT was struggling to respond as quickly as the County Attorney would like.

Mr. Dusek said he was glad he had raised the Town of Chester issue with the Committee, because he now had a much clearer vision of how the IT Department functioned. He acknowledged the distinction between the software/systems side vs. the telecommunications, help desk side. With regards to today's discussion, he said he understood the Committee did NOT want to extend systems support to the towns, etc. and the Clerk could delete the pending item. However, he further noted the Committee appeared to view the telecommunications type of support as a service to be considered, on a case by case basis. *[Please note the matter regarding the request from E&T and DOL for telecommunications services will be carried as a pending item.]*

Returning to the Agenda review at Item 3, Major Project Discussion, Mr. Metthe stated that in view of the time, he would prefer to table the in-depth review until after the August or September meeting.

Mr. Dusek left the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

Mr. Metthe briefly mentioned there were a number of web-based projects that had begun to take shape. He said one comment that seems to be repeated throughout the County, was that various departments have standard forms they would like to post on the web site.

Following a brief discussion, Mr. Metthe agreed he could provide a short report at the next Department Head meeting regarding the posting of forms on the County's website.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Gearghy, Mr. Sheehan adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carlene A. Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist